

Document No. 5: Record of Conversation between Vadim

Medvedev and Kurt Hager

October 13, 1989ⁱ

At the beginning Comrade Medvedev expressed his delight to be able to greet Comrade Hager in the CC of the CPSU as an old, trusted friend. He considered the GDR Cultural Days in the USSR to have been a great, memorable event in the realm of cooperation between both countries.ⁱⁱ This cooperation is meaningful particularly in the present circumstances where the situation in both countries is marked by important events. For the CPSU, support for the GDR is very important, as is an understanding of the process of reorganization and its problems. This aspect [of Soviet-GDR understanding] is also important during the Cultural Days.

Important processes are also taking place in the GDR, most of them positive, including the 40th anniversary of the GDR, for it means the 40-year existence of a socialist state on German soil.

The CPSU is equally aware that the SED is confronted with problems today. The Soviet comrades hope very much that they will be overcome.

Comrade Hager on his behalf expressed thanks for a friendly reception. He conveyed greetings to Comrade Mikhail

Gorbachev and the Politburo of the CC CPSU from Comrade Erich Honecker and of the Politburo of the CC SED.

The visit by Comrade Gorbachev to Berlin, his encounters with citizens and the youth, particularly at the FDJ'sⁱⁱⁱ torch-light procession, revealed a great deal of support towards Comrade Gorbachev.

Especially important was the meeting with Comrade Erich Honecker and the entire Politburo. In these discussions the problems of both countries were referred to openly and candidly, and a deepening of cooperation was stressed as absolutely necessary, both in the economy and technology, and in the realm of social sciences and culture.

The "Long Term Conception" just signed is an important document and offers a good foundation for both countries, for cultural and artistic figures, and for the ministries, to raise cooperation to a qualitatively higher level and develop new forms. The Cultural Days have begun successfully and have proved once again that culture makes a contribution as only it can--namely an emotional one, which has an effect on the feelings. In this spirit the party has resolved unanimously to fulfill this Conception. Comrade Hager proposed that the departments of both Central Committees act in coordination toward that aim, and make the corresponding proposals for conversion of the Conception.

Proceeding to the issue of the present situation in the GDR, Comrade Hager reported on a two-day Politburo session, in which all the issues and faults in the work of the party and State had been discussed openly. Altogether it was a very critical discussion. Problems of the role of worker-and-farmer-power, the party, and also cooperation between the fraternal parties were discussed. To that effect, there was unanimous agreement to throw out everything which was unproven, to give up what is routine, and to carry out changes both in party work as well as in the state organs, people's representatives, and in the media and information policies. As a result of the discussions, the Politburo adopted a declaration which will be published. Excerpts can also be found in Pravda.

Comrade Medvedev made the point that the possibility of a verbatim publication is being looked into.

Comrade Hager informed further that artists and cultural figures have spoken out increasingly critically, [on subjects] having nothing to do with cultural or social problems, but rather mostly about the emerging general situation. Statements by the Academy of Arts and by the Cultural League have been published.^{iv} On the general situation and its origins Comrade Hager said the following:

1. The emigration of tens of thousands of citizens to the FRG is creating great anxiety and raises a question as to the causes.

2. The GDR is at the mercy of a massive campaign by the enemy--psychological warfare against the GDR, the SED, and socialism--which has been a complete failure.

3. An array of opposition groups has emerged; they are trying to organize themselves, the Social Democratic Party among others, of which 7 of 14 founders are clergymen.^v A group of church dignitaries is playing a negative role and stirring up the atmosphere. Others opposed to this are searching for a way to reach agreement with the state organs.

4. Artists and cultural figures, scientists, and other members of the intelligentsia, workers, and farmers feel that there is an inconsistency between words and deeds, their everyday experiences do not correspond to official reporting.

Consequently a justifiable discontent is forming.

On this basis the Politburo adopted the above-mentioned declaration, which contains all these aspects and opens up new paths for the development of the party and for life in the GDR.

Presently consultations are taking place with district and municipality leaderships as well as with friendly parties.

A plenary session of the CC SED is being prepared, which will comment on the situation and present a platform of tasks for the further development of socialism in the GDR for discussion in preparation for the IX Party Congress. All these steps and plans mean the initiation of a great dialogue with all circles of the population, the majority of which supports the strengthening of socialism.

There are also forces, however, which support anti-socialist positions and choose other forms of discussion, namely demonstrations, and attacks on armed [state] organs. In this respect heightened vigilance is required to prevent counterrevolutionary actions. An adjustment in media policy is also important to moving forward.

In all, a great change is occurring in life in the GDR, in the spirit of the motto of continuity and change, where stress is being placed on change. In this stormy time it is necessary to hold course, to allow for no pessimism, and to defend the values of socialism--all of these being tasks for ideological work, in which the role of culture is not unimportant.

Comrade Medvedev was thankful for the detailed statement and for his part reported on the recent Politburo session of the CC CPSU. In these deliberations the outcome of Comrade Gorbachev's visit to the GDR was discussed. Comrade Gorbachev

gave a detailed report on the jubilation, the festivities, his talks with people on the sidelines, and on the meetings with the party leadership and with Comrade Honecker. There was complete agreement on the view that the CPSU will always support the GDR. In the past they always granted aid and support and that will also be so in the future:

- towards the workers' and farmers' state on German soil;
- towards the party leadership;
- and always aid as well [against] attacks from outside.

At the same time the Politburo expressed hope and confidence that the SED party leadership will solve these problems on the basis of a far-reaching analysis and find ways to continue to build socialism. Above all, steadfastness regarding the tenets of socialism is the most important by far for both states and equally for all other socialist states.

Comrade Medvedev expressed a determination to deepen the cooperation between both states, parties, and peoples. This is necessary in the fields of science and the economy--just as his talk with Professor Scheler^{vi} stressed--and similarly in the cultural realm. In this respect, the "Long Term Conception" has great importance; it will also have repercussions on ideological and theoretical work. Therefore,

coordination must take into account the present conditions of socialism and in the world at large. In the party spheres both parties should see that this cooperation gains in speed and strength, so that concrete goals may be achieved. In conclusion, Comrade Medvedev reported that Comrade Gorbachev was informed of this meeting and conveyed his warmest greetings. He likewise gives his regards to Comrade Honecker and the entire Politburo leadership, [and states] that there is much sympathy for their current problems and that he will follow attentively what is happening in the GDR. One hopes that the party leadership can cope with the situation and that the position of socialism will be strengthened.

Comrade Hager expressed his thanks for the discussion and said that the positions of socialism will never be surrendered. However, what was achieved could not be undone, and that remains so. The GDR is always closely bound to the Soviet Union, and knows what it obtained in friendship and solidarity, without which it would not have been able to survive. This points to the responsibility that the GDR bears at this point in Europe and in view of the sentiments heard already from the FRG.

[Source: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und
Massenorganisationen der DDR -Bundesarchiv, SED, ZK,
IV2/2039/283. Translated by Christiaan Hetzner.]

ⁱ Before this discussion, CPSU Member of the Politburo and CC Secretary Vadim Medvedev and Kurt Hager signed a "Long Term Conception for the Development of Cooperation between the GDR and the USSR in the sphere of Culture until the year 2000."

ⁱⁱ The "Days of GDR Culture" in the USSR opened on October 12, 1989, in Moscow in the presence of Hager and CC CPSU Secretary Lev Zaikov.

ⁱⁱⁱ Freie Deutsche Jugend, the Free German Youth, was the official youth movement of the German Democratic Republic.

^{iv} The declaration of the Presidency of the Academy of the Arts in the GDR and the Communiqué of the Presidential Session of the GDR Cultural League were already published in Neues Deutschland on October 4, 1989, and October 13, 1989, respectively. [Footnote in the original.]

^v The Social Democratic Party in the GDR (SDP) was founded on October 7, 1989, in Schwante (Municipality Oranienburg). The founding appeal "For an ecological social democracy" was first published in Die Welt on October 9, 1989. [Footnote in the original.]

^{vi} Medvedev met beforehand with President of the GDR Academy of Sciences Prof. Dr. Werner Scheler.